

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

270641Z Jun 05

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| | CIAE-00 | INL-00 | DODE-00 | DOEE-00 | DS-00 | EAP-00 | EUR-00 |
| | UTED-00 | VC-00 | H-00 | TEDE-00 | INR-00 | IO-00 | LAB-01 |
| | L-00 | VCE-00 | M-00 | AC-00 | NEA-00 | DCP-00 | NSAE-00 |
| | NSCE-00 | OIC-00 | OIG-00 | OMB-00 | NIMA-00 | PA-00 | MCC-00 |
| | PER-00 | PM-00 | GIWI-00 | PRS-00 | ACE-00 | P-00 | SP-00 |
| | SSO-00 | SS-00 | TRSE-00 | EVR-00 | FMP-00 | BBG-00 | R-00 |
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SENSITIVE

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDING SENSITIVE CAPTION)

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA-WATCHERS
INFO AF/PD (DWHITMAN)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: A VISIT WITH CHADIAN GRAND IMAM AND THE
HIGH COUNCIL ON ISLAMIC AFFAIRS

1. (SBU) Summary: During a visit with the High Council for Islamic Affairs June 20, Chad's Grand Imam welcomed the Embassy's support for English classes at Muslim schools, responded positively to statements about charges of abuse of the Koran at Guantanamo, urged Washington to consider eventually releasing the prisoners held there, and agreed to work with the Embassy on the problem of child begging. The Ambassador's call on the Grand Imam attracted extensive and favorable media coverage. End Summary

MUSLIM OUTREACH

2. (SBU) The Ambassador, accompanied by the PAO, spoke to Grand Imam Haasan Hissein Abkar about continuing cooperation between the United States and Chad. The Ambassador highlighted the Embassy's English teaching micro-scholarship program, which funds English classes for 75 students in three Muslim secondary schools in N'Djamena. The Grand Imam expressed his gratitude for this program, and his hopes that it would expand in the future. The Ambassador also provided the Grand Imam with some information on Muslim life in America, and the two discussed the success of this year's visit by the American Imam Mohamed Bashar Arafat, funded through the International Visitors program.

KORAN ALLEGATIONS

3. (SBU) The Ambassador also spoke with the Grand Imam, and the six High Council members present at the meeting, about the allegations of abuse of the Koran in Guantanamo. The Ambassador assured the Imam that abuse of the Koran would not be tolerated. The Ambassador also provided the Imam with the latest information on the allegations, in Arabic, from the Washington File. This included a May 11th statement by Secretary Rice, and a May 14th report on the initial investigation of the allegations by the Department of Defense.

IMAM'S REACTION

4. (SBU) Reacting to the Koran abuse allegations, the Imam

first thanked the USG for "allowing the prisoners of Guantanamo to read their holy book, to practice their faith, and for preparing their food in accordance with Muslim practices." The Imam said that the allegations of abuse of the Koran had "shocked the hearts of more than one billion Muslims around the world." However, he went on to state that, "we do not judge the American Government because of individual behaviors; at the same time these individual behaviors should be punished by the Government." The Imam asked to send a message to Washington through the Ambassador, saying that "for the American Administration to show [] its kindness to the world, it should free the prisoners of Guantanamo, as soon as it can be sure that they will not be killed in their own countries and they will not return to any kind of terrorist activity."

CHILD BEGGING

15. (SBU) The streets of N'Djamena are often crowded with children begging. Those carrying small aluminum bowls are sent out by their Islamic school in search of alms. The Ambassador raised this issue with the Imam, saying that he hoped to work with the Imam to find a solution to the problem. The Imam was receptive to the request, and suggested that the High Council and the Embassy for a working group to discuss possible solutions.

MEDIA COVERAGE

16. (SBU) The visit received heavy media coverage. Radio Nationale du Tchad and FM Al-Koran broadcast news of the - visit in Standard Arabic, French. and Chadian Arabic. Television du Tchad (TVT) also covered the visit in both its French and Arabic evening broadcasts. TVT mentioned that this was the Ambassador's second visit to the High Council, and stated that the Imam and the Ambassador discussed peace, development, and the American-Chadian friendship. TVT also noted that the Ambassador talked to the Grand Imam about the success of the Embassy's Muslim outreach, in particular in the form of the English Language Program in Muslim schools. The TVT coverage in French also featured the Ambassador stating that "we will not tolerate any lack of respect for the Koran," and included footage of the warm greeting given to the Ambassador by the Grand Imam, who took the Ambassador's hand as the two walked through the halls of the Grand Mosque.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) The High Islamic Council in Chad is composed of moderate Sufi Muslims, and the relationship between the Council and the Embassy continues to strengthen. Since the visit, the PAO has received two calls from the Imam's Secretary General thanking the Ambassador and the PAO for

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the visit. The warm and genial atmosphere of the meeting is an indication of the successful efforts of the Embassy's Muslim outreach programs, reflecting a core MPP goal.

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